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LETTER DATED 3 JUNE 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ZIMBABWE TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

In my capacity as the representative of the Current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, I have the honour to transmit herewith a press statement on the establishment of an International Panel of Eminent Personalities to Investigate the Genocide in Rwanda and the Surrounding Events.

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Machivenyika Tobias MAPURANGA
Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe
Representative of the Current Chairman
of the Organization of African Unity

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Annex

Press statement on the establishment of an international panel of eminent personalities to investigate the genocide in Rwanda and the surrounding events issued on 3 June 1998

The Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity, Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim, after consultation with the current Chairman of OAU, President Robert Gabriel Mugabe, today announced the composition of the International Panel of Eminent Personalities, to investigate the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and the surrounding events. The Chairman of the Panel is Sir Ketumile Masire, the former President of the Republic of Botswana.

Other members of the Panel are:

General Amadou Toumani Touré, former Head of State of Mali;

Judge Mohamed Bedjaoui of Algeria, former Minister of Justice, former Ambassador to France, former Permanent Representative to the United Nations, former President of the International Court of Justice, currently serving as a Judge of the Court at The Hague;

Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia, former Government Minister and former Assistant Administrator and Executive Director, Regional Bureau for Africa of the United Nations Development Programme;

Ms. Lisbet Palme of Sweden and Chairperson of the Swedish Committee for UNICEF and expert on the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child as well as a member of the Eminent Persons Group for the United Nations study on the impact of armed conflict on children;

Justice Bagwati of India, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India;

Ambassador Steven Lewis of Canada, former Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations and currently Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF.

The establishment of the Panel follows the proposal made by the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Ato Meles Zenawi, in November 1997 to the Central Organ of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution at its seventh ordinary session at ministerial level. The proposal was endorsed by the Central Organ and also, subsequently, by the OAU Council of Ministers at its sixty-seventh ordinary session, held at Addis Ababa in February 1998.

In announcing the composition of the Panel, the Secretary-General indicated that the investigation would address, among other things, issues such as the root causes of the genocide Rwanda, the circumstances in which that genocide took place and its consequences in Rwanda and the Great Lakes region, including the roles of States and non-State actors before, during and after the genocide.

The Secretary-General underscored the fact that the Panel will be guided in its work by all the relevant international and OAU conventions, as well as legal instruments, including, in particular, the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

The Panel will also be guided in its work by the relevant declarations adopted by the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government.

The Secretary-General also announced the establishment of a Special Trust Fund, to support the work of the Panel and ensure its independence. In this regard, he appealed to OAU member States and the rest of the international community to contribute generously to the Special Trust Fund.

In order to facilitate the work of the Panel and provide expert advisory services to it, a Panel Support Group made up of experts and advisors from a multidisciplinary background with the requisite knowledge and experience of the region is also being set up.

The Panel, which is to be inaugurated in September 1998, is to have is secretariat at Addis Ababa.